

Spot the Difference

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[0 : 00] Colossians chapter 2. We look again at verse 6. We're going to look at an overview of what we read from verse 6 to the end of the chapter.

Just read again at verse 6. Therefore as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. As Paul is writing to the church at Colossae, he's writing to a church, as is often the case when you're reading Paul's letters, a church that is young in the faith and with many different challenges. All around them. There's a phrase that's used that you maybe hear. They stand out in a crowd or they wouldn't get lost in a crowd.

What does it mean? Well it usually applies to someone maybe of a certain appearance. It might be their height. That means that they wouldn't get lost in a crowd or you would notice them in a crowd. [1 : 08] Or it may be something to do with how they dress. That they're dressed differently to everybody else. Therefore they wouldn't get lost in that crowd. And in a sense, Paul as he's writing to the church at Colossae and other churches, and it was a read of in the New Testament here, he's writing to encourage the believers to be different.

To be different in the midst of the crowd that they're in. To stand out in the crowd. To have something different about them.

And he's highlighted that already in this letter. In verse 27 of chapter 1 he says, So he's already making it clear there to the Christians, there's something about you that is different to everybody else around you who doesn't have Christ.

You have Christ in you. The hope of glory. And so as he's going on from there, he's explaining how this impacts their life. In chapter 2, verse 5, he says there, So again, he's just outlining there that there's something about these believers that is showing that they are different to the rest of the people around them who have not Christ.

They are standing in the firmness of their faith in Christ. And this would not be something easy to do. Just as it isn't easy in our own day at times.

[2 : 53] It's not easy to stand up on the side of Christ. And to stand up for Christ in our society and among the people around us. But Paul is writing to encourage them to be different to everybody else around them.

And many ways as we go through chapter 2, verse 6 down to the end, he's showing us ways that they are to be different. And it's a little like maybe you've played the game, Spot the Difference. When you have two pictures in front of you and there's maybe ten different things in one picture to the other. And you have to find the difference. You have to spot the difference. And some can be very easy.

They stand out immediately. But others you have to really study hard to see where is the difference. Well, in Colossus, the Christians were to be different.

And some of these differences you could spot. And others were maybe more difficult. And the same is true for ourselves as Christians in the world. Is it obvious to others that we're Christians?

[3 : 57] Would they be able to look at us and see, There's the difference in that person. There's where they're different to me. Because this is what they believe. This is who they trust.

This is how they live. Is it easy to spot the difference? Well, Paul highlights in these verses, Verse 6 down to the end, Five differences.

Five differences. This is how the believers had called us. Who were to be different to others around them. Who didn't believe in Christ with all their hearts. And the first thing we see is in verse 6 to 8. And here the difference is whose teaching we are under. In verse 6 to 8. So he's saying to them there, You have received Christ. Now walk in him, rooted and built up in him, Established in the

faith, just as you were taught, Abounding in thanksgiving.

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy, An empty deceit, according to human tradition, According to elemental spirits of the world, And not according to Christ.

[5 : 02] And so there's this idea here, That the foundation of their faith is the Lord Jesus Christ. But all around them are those who seek to lead them astray.

To take them captive, as it says there in verse 6. To take them away from the faith that they have in Jesus Christ. And Paul is saying this is where you are to be different.

That you are rooted in Christ Jesus. Built up in him, established in the faith. This is your foundation. This is where your strength is.

That you have Christ in you, the hope of glory. And so don't get pulled away. Don't just get pulled back into the crowd Who are believing in all these different philosophies.

Empties, deceits, human traditions, as he's calling them there as well. Elemental spirits of the world. And there's so many things he lists off.

[6 : 03] There's so many things going on in Paul's day there that still go on in our day as well.

We're trying to be, people are trying to pull the Christian away back into the world. But Paul's saying no.

Stand out from the crowd. Dare to be different. Bear to have that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Established and rooted in him. And so he's telling them here, you stay firm in the midst of all of these challenges.

Don't change anything. But remain firm and rooted in Christ. But what do we see in the world? In which we live.

We see people constantly wanting to change the Christian faith. And you hear it more and more.

You see it more publicly as well. A couple of years ago, there was a program on television.

Piers Morgan was on it. And he was speaking about the Bible. And he was speaking to Christians about the Bible. And the Christians were saying how they believed in the word of God.

[7 : 13] But Piers Morgan was saying, but surely the word of God needs updating. Surely now in the 20th century, 21st century, we need to update the word of God.

So it makes sense to people today. To bring everybody under its banner. To give everybody their rights. And he was talking about it in the midst of all these different issues.

Whether it was gay and transgender issues. That they have to be brought in. And the Bible needs to be updated to accommodate them and their rights. He was saying it's flawed.

But the Christians were adamant saying, no. The word of God cannot be changed. It's God's law to us. It's the teaching that we are under. We don't change it to suit ourselves.

We don't change it because our views we want to change. We have to find ourselves under what God is saying. Taking his teaching seriously. And listening to what the word of God is saying.

[8 : 12] And so there we see the first difference is to stand out in the crowd in terms of the teaching that we are under. We are under the authority of the word of God. The teaching of the word of God.

And then the second thing as we go on. We see in verse 9 to 12. We see that sense of whose authority we're under. Whose authority we're under. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.

And you have been filled in him who is the head of all rule and authority. In him. You see how often the word in him, in him, in him is used there.

And he is the one who has all rule and authority. So whose authority are we under? Who is it that we're going to listen to here? Recognition by others is something that's often a temptation.

A temptation just to do something that's going to please others. But everything we do is to please Christ. And so it's his authority that we're under.

[9 : 21] And you think of Daniel in the Old Testament. Who wouldn't change whose authority he was under. No matter what they threatened him with. He was always going to be obedient to God as his Lord.

And nothing they could do or say was going to take that from him. But do we have that strength? Do the church at Colossae have that strength? To remain under the authority of him.

Who is the head of all rule and authority. And so there's the challenge for them. It's about a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you see here he talks about it in the way of circumcision as well. Being circumcised, made by hands. It's talking about here he talks about not made by hands.

We're looking at something different. Dare to be different here. And many religions have their add-ons. And this was something that the false teachers were seeking to keep added in to their faith.

[10:24] You still need to be circumcised. And they're saying we're still under the authority of the old ways. But they're starting to say no, we're under the authority of Christ. All that has changed.

He circumcised the heart. He lays us bare before God in our heart. Not what we do physically, but what we are within. And we are complete in him.

And he has authority over all things. In verse 12 he makes that clear. Having been buried with him in baptism in which you were also raised with him through faith.

In the powerful working of God who raised him from the dead. So there's all authority here. From birth to death to eternity.

In him is the way. In the Lord Jesus Christ. It's Christ authority that we're under. And are we submitting ourselves to that authority?

[11:24] Or do we seek to kind of add things to our own faith? Many places do. But we are to remain firm and rooted in the faith in Christ Jesus.

Who has all rule and authority. Trusting in him. The greatest honour we can have is to be known as the children of God.

And that is what we are. Through faith in him. So we're under his authority. To be different. To stand out as being under his authority.

The third difference we see here in verse 13 to 15. Whose grace are we under? And this is maybe the most easy of the spot.

The difference that we have here. In verse 13. And you who were dead in your trespasses. Dead in your trespasses. And the uncircumcision of your flesh.

[12:23] God made alive together with him. Having forgiven us all our trespasses. So similar to what he writes to the Ephesians. For you were dead in your trespasses and sins.

But you were made alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. Very similar. He's talking about the same thing here. Whose grace are we coming under?

We see here that it is in Christ Jesus. That we are made alive. And he has done this as it goes on to say in verse 14. By cancelling the record of debt.

That stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside. Nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities. And put them to open shame.

By triumphing over them in him. So again we're looking to Christ. We're looking to the cross. That is the way of salvation.

[13:18] The way of salvation for so many others. We're looking for many different ways. Many different gods. Many different ideas of how we're going to be saved. But here we see it's by grace.

And grace alone. That we are saved. And that's the difference. You notice at the end of verse 15. By triumphing over them in him.

In the ESV Bible. It's got a little note beside it there. Number four. Which is to say or in it. Which is the cross. So it's in him.

Or in it. But they mean the same thing. It's always pointing to him on the cross. That that is the way of salvation. By grace. In the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. And so we have that hope. Of glory through Christ Jesus. Who has gone to the cross for us. Then we move on.

[14:16] We see verse 18 and 19. And here it's speaking about. Kind of the predictions. That we're under. They're looking to the future.

And how we can discern. What lies ahead of us. In verse 18. Let no one. Disqualify you. Insisting on asceticism. And worship of angels. Going on in detail.

About visions. Puffed up. Without reason. By his sensuous mind. And not holding fast. To the head. From whom the whole body. Nourished and knit together.

Through its joints and ligaments. Grows with a growth. That is from God. So again. It's. How are we looking. Ahead to the future. Whose predictions.

Are we coming under. And the people. In Colossae. As they had in the past. Are being. Tempted away. To go and. Look at all these. Different ways.

[15:11] Insisting on. Worship of angels. Visions. Sensuous mind. It's all these ideas. That come to people. That this is what we need.

To guide us. In the way forward. Where. No. Our growth. Is from God. God. And we are under. His. Predictions. How many people.

In our world. Today. Their. Their daily reading. Is the horoscope. What's the horoscope. Going to say to me. For this day. For this week. Or for this year.

They're looking to the stars. They're looking in all kinds. Of different places. To find. A way. To the future. This is their predictions. This is what lies ahead of them. Well we are to be different.

And say. Well God has told us. God has shown us. Our future. We don't know. Everything that's involved in it. But we know the security.

[16:07] Of what he's saying to us. That for. To know Christ. Is to know that. Hope of glory. That whatever this world brings us. We have that security. In him.

It's interesting. In terms of. What you hear. When you go to a funeral. And especially. When you go to the cemetery.

And you have different conversations. With different people. But probably one of the most.

Recurring. Comments. That I hear is. Well you just don't know.

What's ahead. And you can see the truth. In that. You never know. The moment. So we don't know. And it's. A good thing is often added to that.

It's a good thing we don't know. But then you look at it. The other hand as well. We are walking. Towards. A grave. And we do know.

[17:02] What's ahead of us. Because it's there. In front of us. That there is an end. For everyone. So yes. We don't know. What's ahead of us.

In one sense. We don't know. What a moment. Or a day. Will bring. But on the other hand. We know. What's ahead. Because. The word of God. Tells us.

And we see it all around us. Every day. We are all. Destined. For that grave. Unless the Lord. Returns. That is. The prediction of God.

That's what he is telling us. And there is no way. To avoid any of these issues. The matter of life. And death. They belong to God. And so these are the predictions.

And the promises. That the word of God. Tells us. The people here. You could see. They could look into their visions. And their worship of angels. And all of these things. Their minds.

[17:57] Trying to discern. What lay ahead of them. In the future. But it was all about God's predictions. And the will. Of God. And seeking. That will.

So whose predictions. We are to be different. By reminding ourselves. And others. That we are under God's word. That tells us exactly. What we have. That we have life.

And death. And eternity. These are the. Guaranteed. For us. We don't know the times. Or the moment. But we know the truth.

Of the word of God. That tells us. And the only way. To be secure in that. Is to be faith. To have faith. In the Lord Jesus Christ. To dare. To be different.

And to remind others. Christ. Is what we need. For these things. The final thing. We see here. Is in verse 16. And 17. And there's.

[18:57] Also verse 20. To 23. And we see here. It's all about rules. In verse 16. To 17. You have these rules.

Of questions. Of food. And drink. Of festivals. The new moon. Or the Sabbath. So there's all these. Rules. That they're coming under. How you do this.

And then you have it. In verse 20. To 23. As well. Do not submit. To regulations. Do not handle. Do not taste. Do not touch.

There's all these. Rules. That people. Are trying. To bring in. And to keep. As the forefront. Of their mind. But what. Paul is reminding them.

Of here as well. Is in like. It says in verse 17. These are a shadow. Of the things to come. But the substance. Belongs. To Christ.

[19:52] Or as he says. In verse 23. These indeed. Have an appearance. Of wisdom. And promoting. Self-made. Religion. And asceticism. And severity. Of the body. But they're of no value.

In stopping. The indulgence. Of the flesh. So in both. These situations. He's saying. There's all these. Rules. But if that's all.

You have. They're of no use. To you. Everything belongs. To Christ. And all the rule.

And all authority. And all the predictions. All of these things. They all belong. To Christ. And that is. What makes us stand out.

In everything. To spot the difference. Is to say. We are standing. In Christ. Go back to verse 6. Therefore as you received.

[20 : 48] Christ Jesus the Lord. So walk in him. Rooted. And built up in him. And established. In the faith. Just as you were taught. Abounding. In thanksgiving.

There is. The firmness. There is the difference. In all of these things. That we have Christ. That we are standing fast. In him.

That we are seeking to obey. His rule. His authority. His word. And that is what matters. For us. Christ.

Christ. Is all. We need. We have him. We have the hope. Of glory. And that is what Paul. Is reminding the church.

At Colossae. You have. Christ. In you. The hope. Of glory. That will make you. Stand out. In a crowd. That will make people see.

[21 : 45] There is something. Different. About you. And that is the same. For ourselves. Today. We have that same. Christ. In us. The hope. Of glory.

But do we see. Ourselves. So different. To the rest. Around us. Do we stand out. In the crowd. In all of these ways. That the love of Christ.

That we have. Is what others see. Or are we just. Blending. In with the rest. May the love of Christ. In our hearts. And the hope of glory.

In us. Be something. That makes us. Stand out. And to be different. And to say. We have. This Christ. We love him. With all our hearts.

And we will stand. For him. Let us pray. Lord our gracious God.

[22 : 40] As we read these words. And as we think of. The days in the church. In Colossae. When there were so many. Challenges around them. Challenges abounding. In so many different ways.

And we see the similar. Challenges that we face. Ourselves. In our own day and age. And see how the world. Is always talking about. Change for the better. Yet we are no better.

When we drift away. From Christ. We have made no progress. When we go away from him. And so we pray Lord. That we will be led back. To him. Even as Paul. Sought to lead the people.

To walk closely. With him as their Lord. We pray that you will help. Us as your people. And all of your people. Near and far. To stand out in the crowd.

Of this world. To stand up. On the side of Christ. To acknowledge him. And to seek to walk. Closely with him. Rooted. And built up in him.

[23 : 35] And established. In the faith. Even just. As we have been taught. Ourselves. Over all of our days. So Lord. Guide us. We pray. Continue with us. Pardon us.

In all our sin. As all we ask. We ask in his precious name. Amen.